



U.S. Department
of Transportation

National Highway
Traffic Safety
Administration

ODI RESUME

INVESTIGATION: EA00-020

DATE OPENED: 10-AUG-00

SUBJECT: Failure of the lights and/or windshield wipers, resulting in obscured vision

PROMPTED BY: Owner Complaints (PE00-006)

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: *David Langjahr*

MANUFACTURER: Volkswagen of America

MODELS: Passats and Jettas

MODEL YEARS: 1996

VEHICLE POPULATION: Passats, 19,356; Jettas, 88,992

PROBLEM DESCRIPTION: The complainants allege that while driving the lights (and sometimes, wipers) fail. This failure increases the risk of a vehicle crash due to obscured vision.

FAILURE REPORT SUMMARY

	ODI	MANUFACTURER	TOTAL
COMPLAINTS:	4	11	15
CRASHES:	0	0	0
INJURIES:	0	0	0
WARRANTY CLAIMS:	0	4476*	4476*

ACTION: An Engineering Analysis has been opened.

ENGINEER: *D. Langjahr*

DIV CHF: *R. Hays*

OFC DIR: *[Signature]*

8-9-00

DATE

8/9/00

DATE

8/10/00

DATE

* This information was given verbally, and reflects the maximum number of warranty claims (related to ignition switch replacement/repair) which may be applicable. Per VW, "VW's warranty system is not organized in a manner which allows us [i.e., VW] to extract claims relating or potentially relating to the alleged defect."

VW 8-9-00

SUMMARY:

ODI opened the Preliminary Evaluation based on the receipt of four reports of lighting failure, with three of the four also reporting windshield wiper failure. Two of the four failures were intermittent. Reportedly, jiggling the ignition key sometimes restored function. The ignition switch feeds an accessory relay, which in turn feeds many electrical subsystems.

VW was unable to furnish hard copies of the warranty claim data and reported verbally that there are over 4,000 claims which may be applicable. This means that over 4 % of the vehicles may have had applicable warranty work performed. This is an extremely high rate.

For owner complaints, average mileage and time to failure is 28K miles and 32 months, respectively.

Technical Bulletin 95-07, dated 11-24-95, covering MY93 and later Passats lists causes for power circuit loss as shift lock cable misadjusted, switch or lock binding or defective key; the Jetta ignition switch cylinder was changed in mid 1996.

ODI has recorded nine recalls in the last nine years for lighting or wiper failure. The majority of state motor vehicle regulations in the United States require functioning lights and wipers.

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An EA is being opened to gather further appropriate information. Of particular concern is a clarification of the warranty data. Once that data is obtained and analyzed, ODI will assess the safety implications and risks concerning these failures.

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